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# ACROSS *the* LINES

## Critical Risk Training

When you think of powerline workers and risk – images of people working up ladders quickly comes to mind.

But sometimes the highest risks faced in the field are not immediately obvious, PowerNet critical risk project manager Graeme Webby says.

“Probably the biggest risk our teams have the least control over is driving to and from jobs – not the work itself,” he says.

Analysing risk across all field team activities has been a key part of Graeme’s focus during the development of a critical control framework – essentially the continued evolution of best practice workplace safety.



*Staff training on the critical risk project.*

“Our teams are really committed to ensuring the power stays on, but we need to ensure they are always safe out in the field,” Graeme says.

The project supports the PowerNet motto: “Work safely, someone expects you home tonight”.

Every day dozens of lines workers are working in the field, and the health, safety and environment team’s challenge is to further enhance their workplace safety.

The framework has been worked on for the past year and Graeme says the feedback from all the field team during the consultation and validation phases has been invaluable.

“We identified all the different critical areas – vehicle movements both on and off road, working with electricity, work in confined spaces, lifting loads, trimming trees, and working at heights,” Graeme says.

Risk factors are analysed for all work activities – such as when staff are working up a power pole. The failure modes of poles have been analysed taking into account not only planned maintenance, but also factors such as if a pole has been hit by a vehicle.

“Poles could be cracked below ground,” Graeme says.

A lot of the analysis is done by working out a hypothetical worst-case outcome, then working backwards to identify steps that can be taken to prevent it happening, he says.

Using the data from PowerNet’s competency framework was another integral part of the project, Graeme says.

The project aims to introduce workable, everyday processes that provide a real safety benefit, by reducing unnecessary administration.

“We identified a few gaps in our system, and once we’d fixed those it was a question of how do we apply this to the people in the field.”



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## Critical Risk Training cont....

To achieve this, a digital dashboard system is being developed. It is based on ideal workflows for a range of work functions and allows for work plans to be checked off on a mobile device by staff responsible for each step.

The dashboard system is designed to ensure all the necessary steps are taken before a job is started. If one step has not been completed the work plan goes back to whoever needs to complete the outstanding task or check.

“We’re trying to make it simple for our staff in the field,” Graeme says.

The dashboard brings all the information together to tell the team leader whether everything required has been done, he says.

Steps in the workflow could include equipment needed, whether someone is qualified to operate a piece of machinery, whether a vehicle is ready to go, or whether a contractor is authorised to work on a job. The system leads the user through all the critical activities included in the work and allows them to record their risk assessment process and the controls put in place to manage those activities.

The dashboard is still in the development process with a trial expected to be underway in May. The plan is to introduce it to all teams by the end of the year, and work on enhancing it throughout 2020.

PowerNet general manager business growth Justin Peterson says buy-in from everyone involved is needed to ensure the system works well.

“We’re not compromising safety for productiveness,” he says.

Graeme says the dashboard system should ultimately mean less time spent double-checking or revising plans and hopefully allowing teams to get their work done safely, in a more efficient manner.

“We want our staff to be proud of their work and celebrate their everyday successes,” Graeme says.